



THE SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA STATE AGRICULTURAL RESPONSE TEAM

Vol. 3, No. 4, April 2007

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1st Florida SART Conference is Ready to Go!

If you have not yet made plans to attend the 1st Annual Florida SART Conference scheduled for Wednesday, May 30 to Friday June 1, 2007 to attend the Florida SART Conference at the TradeWinds Island Grand Resort in St. Petersburg Beach you should consider doing so immediately. Attendance is limited. Just copy this address into your Internet browser: www.flsart.org/calendar/stateconference.htm.

“In St. Pete, we will be setting the stage for people from diverse groups, people with differing philosophies and points of view, to come together for the common purpose of working for the betterment of Florida’s animals and agriculture,” says Tom Holt, Florida State Veterinarian and Director of the Division of Animal Industry for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.



“We are going to draw attention to the fact that the ESF-17 function encompasses a very diverse group of agencies, organizations and private citizens,” Holt says. “because our state encompasses a very diverse set of economic and social elements. And yet it is this very diversity that both gives us great strength and at the same time creates opportunities to learn to work together effectively, to bring many perspectives and priorities to the SART table.”

Make your reservations today. Everyone is coming for this informative and educational conference!

Florida’s SART conference welcome and opening remarks are scheduled to be given by Holt, Tim Manning (USDA, FSA) and Joan Dusky (IFAS, UF) on Wednesday the 30th beginning at about 1:00 pm.

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Through the Grapevine *On building County SART teams*

“One of our directions over the next couple of years is to apply the SART team concept as a multi-agency coordinating group (a MAC) at the local level, and to effectively integrate local or county SARTs into our state-wide emergency management effort.”

Tom Holt, DVM
Florida State Veterinarian and Director of the Division of Animal Industry
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Florida VETS Nears Operational Goal

Thanks to grants from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation and continuing support from its Florida affiliate, the FVMAF, Florida VETS is now within striking distance of its goal for disaster-response vehicles and equipment, says John Haven, Director of the U.F. College of Veterinary Medicine. In September 2006 the *SART Sentinel* reported that the program needed an additional \$100,000 to function at peak efficiency. With a more vigorous hurricane forecast for 2007 the timing could hardly be better.

Based at U.F. in Gainesville, VETS can provide veterinary medical care for animals impacted by a disaster. "It is similar in concept to the U.S. Army's old-style MASH units," Haven said. Immediately following a disaster such as a hurricane, a VETS team in cooperation with private, state and federal agencies would perform a needs assessment in an impacted area. The team would assist veterinary hospitals and clinics, coordinate aid for private practitioners, and provide basic to moderate levels of animal care.



Florida VETS can provide veterinary medical care for animals impacted by a disaster. (Photo courtesy Andrew Dunn)

Quick Facts

- VETS stands for Veterinary Emergency Treatment Services.
- VETS is a cooperative effort of the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the 2,600-member Florida Veterinary Medical Association Foundation (FVMAF).
- VETS began with grants from FVMA, Humane Society of the United States, American Veterinary Medical Foundation and PetSmart Charities. The support allowed VETS to purchase two ¾-ton, four-door diesel crew-cab pick-up trucks and equip them for animal emergency services. VETS received in-kind support from Port-A-Vet, Webster Veterinary Supply and Toshiba.
- The Florida VETS Project brochure is available at the FVMA Internet site <http://www.fvma.com/associations/3040/files/071818%20UF%20Donation%20Flyer.pdf>.

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Through the Grapevine

But isn't it really all about hurricanes?

"Because we were so hard hit in 2004 and 2005 and especially by Katrina, we have a tendency to focus on natural disasters, which will never go away and there is always going to be a need to be prepared. Even more insidious, however, systems must be in place for insects and diseases that move unintentionally with the wind (soybean rust) or that hijack into the state (sudden oak death). We have so many new insects here (citrus psyllid), that we need to be vigilant, alert and prepared to eradicate or manage them. They all affect the agricultural industry including affiliates such as the ornamental plant industry ... and the value of our commodities suffers."

Joan Dusky

Associate Dean for Extension, Agricultural Programs, IFAS, UF

New First Detector Booklet To Be Released



“Educate to detect,” writes Amanda Hodges, PhD, Assistant Director of the Southern Plant Diagnostic Network (SPDN). The Southern Network is part of America’s National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN). It promotes early awareness of high risk, exotic and emerging plant pests through enhanced diagnostics, education and response exercises. Hodges developed the brochure in cooperation with Cassandra Bates of Michigan State University and Gail Ruhl of Purdue University; both are affiliated with the North Central Plant Diagnostic Network (NCPDN).

To establish an early warning shield for America’s agriculture, men and women who are in immediate contact with plants can be trained as First Detectors and a new brochure, prepared by Hodges, will soon be available. The responsibility of a First Detector is to recognize exotic pests and insects in the field and to collect samples for area laboratories. Examples of individuals who will want to consider training to become a First Detector are county extension staff, growers, crop advisors, master gardeners and virtually anyone involved in pest management.

Training sessions may consist of general situational awareness to crop-specific analysis; biosecurity, crop-damage photography and sample submission techniques. There is no charge for First Detector training and, upon completion, participants receive a certificate, the ability to access additional information and training modules and will receive specific Agricultural Alerts for their area.

Information about becoming a First Detector and available training sessions can be accessed through www.npdn.org or by contacting Amanda Hodges at (352) 392-1901 achodges@ufl.edu.

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Through the Grapevine

Motivating your volunteers

“One of the important things with the volunteers is to have regular meetings and to have interesting and different training. The interesting part is to have different training such as with birds and wildlife and horses [and other exotic pets]. There are people out there who will volunteer, you just have to look for them.”

Hurricane Season Preparation for Florida Horse Owners



A few relatively easy to accomplish recommendations that will help horse owners prepare for a natural disaster. (Photo courtesy U.F. College of Veterinary Medicine)

U.F. College of Veterinary Medicine equine specialist and SART member Dana Zimmel, DVM, has developed a three-page letter to help horse owners prepare before and after a natural disaster such as a hurricane. The

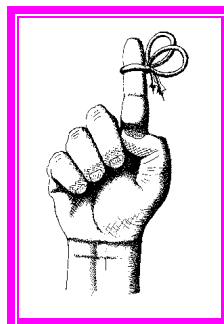
letter contains both legal notes (“A negative Coggins test is necessary if the horse needs to be evacuated to a community shelter or cross the state line.”) as well as useful hints to safeguard your animals (“Fire ants and snakes will search for high ground during flooding. Carefully look over the premises and feed for these potential dangers.”). Her letter may be accessed via the College’s Internet site by going to: <http://www.vetmed.ufl.edu/documents/lah/Information%20for%20Horse%20Owner%20s.pdf>.

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FSA Deadline Reminder re. Groundhog Day Tornado Damage

Farmers that suffered significant damage from the “Groundhog Day” storms February 1-2, 2007 may still apply for 3.75 percent Emergency Loans from the FSA.

Eligible farmers can use the losses, such as repair and up debris or prepare land for livestock, supplies or harvested can also be applied to recover a crops that were destroyed.



money to overcome physical rebuilding farm buildings, clean replanting, and to replace crops that were lost. The money portion of losses on growing

Four central Florida counties – Volusia – have been named declaration areas. Affected in contiguous counties may apply for these loans. Applications are due in county FSA offices by **October 3, 2007**.

Lake, Seminole, Sumter and presidential major disaster eligible producers in these and

Volusia County was also declared a Presidential Major Disaster area on February 8 as a result of the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding on December 25, 2006. Volusia and contiguous counties producers have until **October 9, 2007** to submit Emergency Loan applications.

For information about disaster assistance, contact a local USDA Service Center or FSA office, or visit USDA's website at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/>.

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Southern Plant Diagnostic Network Workshops



More than 80% of all living species are classified as arthropods! (Photo: the Mexican redknee tarantula *Brachypelma smithi*.)

SPDN Invasive Arthropod Workshop - May 7-9, 2007. Clemson University, Clemson, SC. The SPDN Invasive Arthropod Workshop provides Land Grant University, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, USDA-Forest Service, and State Departments of Agriculture the opportunity to discuss communication protocols and invasive arthropod issues relevant to the southern U.S. This workshop also allows participants to have intensive, hands-on identification training for several pest taxa of concern.

Florida's program contact is Amanda Hodges, PhD, SPDN Assistant Director (352) 392-1901 achodges@ufl.edu. Meeting information, program, and registration can be found at <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/arthropod/>.

"We will also provide important information on other invasive species programs," Hodges says, "interactions between regulatory agencies and the NPDN, and other details relating to invasive species."

The **5th Annual SPDN Regional Meeting** is now in the planning stages. It is tentatively planned for the first week of November 2007 in Blacksburg, VA.

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Through the Grapevine

On effective leadership

"It requires leadership; it requires some inspiration; and it requires some vision. You are asking people to make time out of their normal day to work on something that

may never be needed, so I think it takes something special. It's tough to put a name on it. I'm not sure it's a charismatic thing, but it is an ability to articulate a vision and make people feel a little responsible to help."

John Haven

Director of the College of Veterinary Medicine, UF

CAPS – Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program



A CAPS inspector surveys a field of sugar cane for exotic plant pests. (Photo courtesy CAPS)

Have you seen or are you familiar with CAPS? No, not the Gator caps with Back-to-Back (as in back-to-back national basketball championships) logos

CAPS is the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey and it is administered by Florida's DOACS Division of Plant Industry. CAPS is a combined effort by state and federal agricultural agencies to "conduct surveillance, detection, and monitoring of exotic plant pests of agricultural and natural plant resources and biological control agents. Survey targets include plant diseases, insects, weeds, nematodes, and other invertebrate

organisms." You can find out more about this outdoor invasive exotic oversight program by looking on the web at <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/caps/>.

The CAPS State Survey Coordinator is Trevor Smith, PhD smitht2@doacs.state.fl.us 352-372-3505 ext. 452 and the Program Manager is Wayne N. Dixon, PhD dixonw@doacs.state.fl.us 352-372-3505 ext. 118. Smith and Dixon are officed at IFAS, UF in Gainesville.



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Florida's Peculiar Immigrants

Although we have dealt with numerous invasive exotic plants and their destructive tendencies in former issues of the *Sentinel*, there are hundreds of invasive insects and animals in Florida as well. Some are as common as the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), and immigrant from Mexico via the Gulf States, while others are as uncommon as the established colony of Mexican red-rump tarantulas (*Brachypelma vegans*) in St. Lucie County. Here are a few species found in South Florida, which Pam Fuller and Amy Benson of the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division have identified as invasive and potentially destructive (<http://sofia.usgs.gov/sfrsf/rooms/species/invasive/intro/>). Are you familiar with

these species?

Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*): This freshwater mussel came from China in the 1920s via the Columbia River. Perhaps brought in as food for Chinese immigrants or with the Giant Pacific oyster. The mechanism for dispersal is unknown, but it is established in SE Florida: maximum length is 35 mm and lifespan about three years. It is a bio-fouler of electrical and nuclear power plants. As cooling water is drawn from streams and reservoirs, so are *Corbicula* larvae. Inside, the mussel clogs tubes, pipes and fire fighting equipment. Economic problems result from the decreased efficiency. Warm water plant effluents make a hospitable environment for clam populations.



Asian clam: tiny package, destructive potential.
(Richard Bryant photo)

Spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilius*): Native to Central-South America, they resemble alligators, but can be distinguished by a bony ridge in front of the eyes. Coloration between the two species is also different - young alligators are black with yellow bands while caimans are greenish- to brownish-gray with dark brown bands. Adults may grow to eight feet. Established in Dade County, they have been observed in the Everglades. Discarded pets are the most likely source.



Spectacled caiman: please – no feeding by hand!
(F. Wayne King photo)

Giant Rams-horn snail (*Marisa cornuarietis*) Native to northern South America and southern Caribbean islands, it is red with a flat coiled shell about two inches wide. Generally prefers still or slow-moving fresh water. Adaptable to captivity, it may damage aquarium vegetation and is practically omnivorous, feeding on animal and vegetable detritus. Established in South Florida probably when released by aquarium hobbyists. NOTE: This hermaphroditic snail can be a useful aquarium scavenger when not too numerous. It has gills as well as a lung, ensuring efficient underwater respiration. This snail retards the growth of water hyacinth by feeding on its roots and has been released in some areas to control hydrilla. It has also been released to control snail populations that carry *schistosomiasis* (*bilharzias* or swimmer's itch).



Giant Rams-horn Snail: an exotic invasive that actually has a few good points!
(Guiseppe Mazza photo)

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About the SART Sentinel

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The SART SENTINEL is an E-mail newsletter prepared monthly by Rick Sapp and the members of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team. Past issues of the *Sentinel* are archived on the Florida SART Web Site, www.flsart.org.

If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in *The SART SENTINEL*, please contact the Editors.

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